



OFFICE OF THE
WATER DEPARTMENT
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Water Commission Minutes
Wednesday, November 24, 2021

Approved: 12/29/21

John O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm
Other member(s) present: Mat Morton
Meeting held: At the Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, lower level
In attendance:

Reviewed & Signed:

- All Bills Outstanding Since Last Meeting
- All Payroll Outstanding Since Last Meeting

Department Operations Update

Mr. O'Brien reported on the latest with Pepperell. They aren't quite ready to enter into the inter-municipal agreement in time for January, so they have proposed a temporary 6 month agreement. Mr. Palaia has put it to Town Counsel. Otherwise we're good to go. A question arose from Mr. Morton about how to notify SWSS. Mr. O'Brien responded that Mr. Palaia has previously reported the contract with them ends in January. Now there is a provision that the contract could continue for another 60 days, but that has to be triggered and if we have something in place even temporarily with Pepperell there's no need to trigger it. So it all comes down to getting the inter-municipal agreement done in one form or another. It'll most likely be a 3 to 5 year agreement. If it's 5 years it might require town meeting approval. Otherwise the Commission as an elected body with jurisdiction over the water system can enter into the agreement. Mr. O'Brien then turned to the leak being repaired on Lowell Street. That work is progressing. Mr. Morton then asked about the chemical tank leak. Mr. O'Brien responded that that has been fixed. Mr. Voelker briefly reported on the necessary trench permit for the Lowell Street project. There was some back and forth on the necessity of the permit. In the past Highway Dept. did repair work for this sort of a leak and they didn't need to pull a trench permit. But the Building Inspector who issues trench permits felt that one is necessary in this case because the work is being done by a contractor, as opposed to the Highway Dept., and the trench is deeper than 4 feet. To his knowledge the work has started as the trench permit has been issued.

Mr. O'Brien then turned to a ratepayer who applied for a well permit, but who has an outstanding bill with the Water Dept. He consulted with Town Counsel and the town has the legal authority to withhold issuance of the permit until such time as the bill is paid. The ratepayer has since claimed that the well is purely for irrigation, but Board of Health has denied issuance at this stage of things under their own authority for their own reasons. In the meantime it has emerged that about 5 ratepayers are currently pursuing wells. Mr. O'Brien reminded those present that the Board of Selectmen have determined to change the infrastructure project debt service split from 25/75 to 50/50. That will be done formally at their Tax Classification Hearing scheduled for November 30, 2021, and it should provide some relief to ratepayers. Further, talks with Pepperell may yet still result in savings not only for water operator costs but also potentially in other ways such as any future sale of water. Finally, while it may seem allusive the Affordable Housing Project will eventually happen and there is still the likelihood that it would increase the number of ratepayers by a significant

number like 50 percent. In such event the burden would be shared and the costs less for individual ratepayers. The Water Dept. continues to be committed to seeking out ways to contain and reduce costs so that rates can be forestalled in any further increase and potentially lowered wherever possible.

Water Billing Frequency Change to Quarterly Billing

Mr. O'Brien reported on this topic. From a water ratepayer standpoint it's not as big a hit. It may be the same amount of money but it would be more bite size. It's mental, but overall it spreads it out and could help. We might have to add it into the agreement with Pepperell. Mr. Morton was fine with the change. He didn't really see a downside. Mr. O'Brien agreed suggesting it may help folks who need to budget more. The Commission determined to pursue the change but with the caveat that further discussion will need to be had with Pepperell as it would need to be part of the inter-municipal agreement for their being the licensed water operator. Quarterly would essentially double the number of readings expected as well as other related tasks and they could have concerns. It was recalled that this change was suggested to Ms. Bresnick via correspondence with a ratepayer. So there is certainly interest in seeing this kind of a change and the Commission was willing to pursue the matter further.

Next Meeting/Regular Meetings

The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for December 22, 2021. Although, given the proximity to the Christmas holiday the meeting may be shifted to a later date.

Authorization of Accounts Payable & Payroll

The Commission considered and signed off on all of its outstanding bills. The Commission then reviewed and approved payment of the bills and also signed all outstanding department payroll. Mr. O'Brien then briefly reported on all bills he'd reviewed and approved since the last meeting in his capacity as chair. He noted these are the usual ones, utilities, SWSS, alarm, and the like.

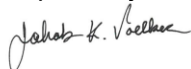
Minutes

The Commission considered the minutes from its meeting held on November 3, 2021. Seeing no reason to modify the minutes the Commission determined to accept the minute.

A motion was made by Mr. O'Brien to approve the minutes of November 3, 2021 as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Morton and passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morton at 6:37 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker
Administrative Assistant, Dunstable Water Department